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SUBJECT: ITALY'S VIEWS ON THE U.S.- EU OPEN SKIES PLUS
AGREEMENT

REF: A. SECSTATE 29781

[1](#)B. SECSTATE 28944

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) The GOI will vote in favor of Open Skies Plus, and is confident that all EU member states will also vote in favor. However, the GOI will not make a public statement on the agreement. The GOI noted that some EU officials suggested delaying the start date of the accord; Italy would favor this course of action. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) EconOffs met with Aldo Sansone, Transport Ministry (MoT) Director General of International Relations--Air Transport; Michele Esposito, MFA Chief of External Relations and International Agreements with the EU; and Achille Vinci-Giacchi, Diplomatic Advisor to MoT. All stated that Italy would vote in favor of the agreement at the EU meeting March 22-23.

[1](#)3. (SBU) All officials with whom we spoke felt confident that the agreement would be approved by all member states. Vinci-Giacchi said his contacts in Brussels indicated that the UK would now vote in favor. Post notes that an article appearing today (Wednesday, March 21) in Italy's leading business daily, Il Sole 24 Ore, stated that London (UK) had overcome its reservations to Open Skies and would vote in favor of the agreement also.

[1](#)4. (SBU) None of our contacts felt that the GOI could make a public statement in favor of the agreement. Vinci-Giacchi noted that Italy was voting in favor of the agreement "reluctantly," since the approval of the agreement would complicate Italian flag carrier Alitalia's impending privatization (no further details).

[1](#)5. (SBU) According to Vinci-Giacchi, there was discussion in Brussels March 20 of postponing the effective date of Open Skies six months beyond the current October 2007 timeframe. He said a delay would allow the GOI more time to consider the best course for Alitalia. With this in mind, he suggested that the GOI would favor delaying the effective date of the agreement to spring 2008.
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